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MR. FECHTER.

NOW, good people of Manchester, what is the meaning of this? Here is Mr. Fechter, in a particular line one of the finest of actors, come to be seen by you, and you are sending him away with a miserable opinion of your taste and hospitality. Mere personal respect ought to have accorded him a heartier reception. You have been cramming the theatre to suffocation every night for the last month, and, all at once, you avoid it as though it were plague-stricken. We quite understand your conduct, but we disapprove of it. Mr. Fechter has come at a very inopportune moment—inserting himself between two visits of the Haymarket company. Reaction from the past carnival and anticipation of the coming one combine to render the present a period of dramatic lassitude. But there are other theatrical attractions besides the Haymarket company; and, while we cannot declare the genius of a single actor to be equally attractive as the aggregate genius of half-a-dozen, we do assert that Mr. Fechter's almost solitary efforts are not by any means so great an anti-climax to those of Mr. and Mrs. Chippendale, Mr. Compton, and Miss Robertson, as may be, and apparently is, imagined. The tragedy of *Ruy Blas* has certainly been miserably mounted, and several of the actors in it are painfully inadequate to the performance of it—notably the mumbling ladies in waiting, and the spindle-shanked clothes-props, whose waggling curls, hung atop, are supposed to be the ambrosial locks of Spain's grandees—but the principal parts are well enough performed, and Mr. Fechter spreads, as Dickens says, a glamour over at least one of them. We sincerely trust tbat Mr. Fechter will not take the indifferent welcome which has so far greeted him for the verdict of Manchester upon him, which we assure him it is not. Manchester does not yet know him, for it has not seen him; and, owing to the unfortunate epoch at which he visits it, it seems disinclined to look at him. But we are confident that, as his merits are made known through the press and those spectators who have been wise enough to give themselves the pleasure of seeing him, he will become more popular. We predict that the latter part of his sojourn amongst us will be more successful than the former, and that any future visit with which he may favour us will be more fortunate still. Not only is there a fashion in theatre-going, but Mr. Fechter is absolutely unknown in these parts, except through London criticisms, which we systematically disbelieve. Reputations are more or less local, and cannot be transplanted or multiplied in no time. Let it not be thought, however, that there have not been fair houses to receive him. The pit, at least, has done its duty—as it generally does.

The play in which Mr. Fechter made his first appearance here does not recommend itself to the taste of the town. It is unpractical, improbable, impossible, absurd. But we do not think altogether badly of it. It is not a play to look for nature in, and we ought not to be disappointed at not finding it. We must surrender ourselves up to the stage illusion, or the thing is insupportable. If we can manage to tolerate the impossibility of the piece, it is an elevating one. Good is to be got out of the spectacle of a magnanimous myth. It is quite possible to derive both pleasure and profit from the contemplation of an utterly ethereal enraptured love, although we may be perfectly certain that such a thing does not exist. The catholic yet subtle portrayal of this metaphysical abstraction is the unique and curious speciality of Mr. Fechter's acting. And it will be seen that he has full play for this singular genius in the character of *Ruy Blas*, when it is learnt that this chivalrous imagination of the dramatist is a patriotic Spaniard, swelling with noble ambitions, who, at one period of his vicissitous career, when he is constrained to condescend to the situation of all most destable to him, that of a "lackey"—oh, the exquisite struggle of detestation, scorn, grief, and chafing impatience, which Mr. Fechter puts into his pronunciation of that word!—he conceives a mad, overwhelming, life-absorbing passion for the future Queen of Spain. The idolatrous nature of his adoration is, however, redeemed by its perfect purity and utter magnanimity. Mr. Fechter actually interprets into representation this impossible imagination. The master, to serve evil private purposes, is the means of realising for him his grandest ambitions, and elevating him to the highest offices of state. In this position he is forced into a contact with the queen which he has studiously, and with what he calls an "agony of self-repression," shunned. It is well that *Ruy Blas*, after the reciprocal avowal of affection by himself and the young neglected princess, the king's affianced bride, who yearns for someone's love, should receive his death-blow in a mutually fatal struggle with the master whose revengeful schemes he has been the innocent instrument in effecting. Such a love as that of *Ruy Blas* must necessarily be unhappy. It has little enough to do with wooing, nothing whatever to do with winning. Success is not for such a delirious dream as his. It would be an anti-climax. It would bring the beautiful poetical monstrosity out of the region of romance, in which alone it is tolerable, into the domain of commonplace, in which its outrageous impossibility would be manifest and insupportable. It is essentially a creature of adversity—a vision, whose exquisite subtlety is perceptible only in twilight. It is a being belonging to a higher world, which at the dawn of day would either fade to nothingness, or show grotesque as Bottom's ass's head. It is a beautiful dissolving view, whose fine outlines grow more and more obscured as the light is more and more turned on. It is an exquisite piece of footlight tinsel, whose tawdry unreality the daylight would reveal.

The play being a representation of an enraptured lover being made an instrument of vengeance on the object of his adoration, it is evident that it possesses genuine dramatic elements; but it is only an adaptation, and—as will be seen—an adaptation of what is almost impossible to be conceived originally, and quite impossible to be translated. Thus, it strikes us as being very crude—a mere vague sketch. It has, however, some dramatic interest, and a few touches of satirical humour. The revengeful master of *Ruy Blas* is conventionally but effectively portrayed by Mr. H. Rayner; Mr. Charles Leclercq plays jauntily a chivalrous good-for-nothing; and Miss Carlotta Leclercq, who is still able to "make up" into a radiant young maiden, achieves the difficult feat of contriving to render the extravagant passion of *Ruy Blas* not wholly unimaginable. But Miss Leclercq's utterance is often so rapid and so low as to be quite unintelligible; and her costume in the last scene is too commonplace.

And now for Mr. Fechter. Who could imagine that the original of the burly-looking photographs, all over moles, exposed in the shop windows, is the romantic lover who majestically stands before us on the stage in all the grace combined of beauty, strength, and youth. Save in his full face, which is rather too heavy to be intellectually and

romantically handsome, Mr. Fechter is the beau ideal of a noble cavalier. The loftiness of his figure, the stateliness of his demeanour, the gracefulness of his attitudes, and—perhaps, most of all—the slender straightness and superb shapeliness of his legs, all magnificently fit him physically for the representation of the sort of character in which lies his peculiar forte. What we especially admire in Mr. Fechter is that dignity of carriage and majesty of expression in him which is so opposite to those theatric fits and starts, those occasional excessive gestures, and that lithe cat-like agility, which we especially dislike in him. He is the most un-Frenchified and the most Frenchified of actors. He is alternately at diametrically opposite poles of dramatic demeanour. When he is full of motion, he is at his graceful worst; when he is full of motionlessness, he is at his grand best. We cannot imagine a more majestic object than him, as *Ruy Blas*, when he suddenly resolves to break the rash compact of implicit service which he, unsuspicious then of its unworthy object, made, and vindicate the honour of the proud station to which the vengeful intrigues of his master have raised him—when, turning on his tyrant, he stands up defiantly before him in all the pride of outraged nobleness—stretched out to his full height, and quivering internally with dignity. Such a spectacle is a triumph of humanity—an evidence of the existence of a soul. Here we catch a vivid flash of that internal spirit of chivalry which adapts Mr. Fechter for the parts he plays, as well mentally as his exterior advantages do physically. But not here alone; for the same volcanic fire which here bursts forth into a glorious fountain of flame, is always smouldering—heaving his breast, and burning his eyes, and every now and then leaping out madly with a lava-torrent of words, or suffusing itself through a glowing countenance and an enraptured attitude and gaze. Mr. Fechter is an actor born—an artist, too. A man whose genius it is to realise high-flown poetical conceptions which in other hands would be insufferable, which without him would be contemned as sentimental dross. Into these characters he throws his soul. No talking to the pit, no passionate outbursts at the gallery, no side-glances at the boxes—in this play—for none of these things would *Ruy Blas* have done, and nothing that *Ruy Blas* would not have done, does Mr. Fechter. His heart—his mind—his soul—his whole life, for the time, is in his work.

While we will not, like the *Guardian*, assert at the beginning of our article that the choice of *Ruy Blas* for the first piece was most happy, and at the end that it was fortunate the play was soon replaced by a less ill-chosen one—we cannot altogether agree with the contempt of the piece indicated in the otherwise capital bit of dramatic criticism which adorned the columns of last Tuesday's *Examiner*. *Ruy Blas* is crude enough, in all conscience, and fantastical enough for Lydia Languish herself. It is, indeed, outrageously impossible. But there is about it a sublimity of sentiment—a preposterous magnanimity—which takes our fancy. The heart of a hero in the livery of a lackey—the man who has it in his soul to govern Spain to good, consigned by callous fortune to the station of a menial—the statesman, in his patriotic pride, yearning to spurn from the council titled jobbers who suck into their own vile carcases their country's blood, the frenzied lover, fighting against his towering passion for the queen, preposterous in its intensity, impossible in its purity:—there is a noble tone about it all. Its author (not adapter) had sound moral judgment, rarest of virtues. He is untrammelled by conventional ideas of nobleness. As for the hero's frenzy of affection, true, such a thing does not exist—at least, at this time, in this country—but it is its very unreality that renders it so fascinating.

SEA WEEDS,
FROM THE COAST OF ANTRIM.

BY EDWIN WAUGH.

DUNLUCE TO BLACK ROCK.

Come to these capes that brave the northern gale,
And bid the wide blue heaving ocean hail!
Come hear, with me, the big tumultuous waves
Bursting like thunder through a thousand caves,
And see the bark, which blackening tempests urge,
Ride o'er the hills of foam, and cleave the boisterous surge.
DR. DRUMMOND.

THE ruins of Dunluce have now disappeared behind us on our road to the Giant's Causeway, and, as we pass Knock-an-chick, or the Gallows Hill, from the top of which many a prisoner of the ancient lords of the castle has taken his last look at the blue waves, a new scene opens upon the sight. Before us lies a fine sweep of the shore, about three miles in extent, full of creeks, and little bays, and rocky fantasies, upon which the patient sea has been at work for millions of years. It seems strange to think that yon water-rounded crag, half-hidden by the laving waves, must have looked just as it does now at the time that Pharoah's daughter found Moses among the bulrushes of the Nile—but it is so. The irregular semi-circle of shore which is now before us lies low for about two miles, then gradually rises, wilder and loftier, up to the grand headlands of the Giant's Causeway, which shut out the coast beyond.

The first object which catches the eye, along the shore, is the little fishing village of Ballintray. From the distance, it looks a sweet little scatterment of white cottages; in fact, it is so, when you are in it. The whitewash of its houses is indeed white, for the breezes of the Atlantic bring no smoke, and the rain that falls there is clean rain. The rain we get in Manchester has to filter its way through a canopy of soot, that makes it mud when it comes to the ground. Ballintray seems "well off" in a small way; it is clean, and orderly; the roads are good; the houses are regular, and comfortably built; and the whole place has a modern aspect. There are no picturesque huts in it, with ricketty walls, and ground for the floor, and wild-flowers sprouting from the thatch. It seems bald of those quaint features which belong to villages of ancient settlement. But, somehow, the abodes of the poorest of the poor in this land do not look half so doleful as the dwellings of the same class of people in a great city. The lowliest shed here, with its smoke-blackened rafters, and its turf fire upon the hearth, has a certain sweetness and prettiness about it. It lies in the lap of Nature; and its poverty is the poverty of a bird's nest. Sun, moon, and stars, the winds and the rains of heaven, seem to dally with it in a kindly way; and it partakes of the charms of the landscape around. The greenness of the scene creeps over it with beautifying caress; and the many-mooded weather mantles its humble walls with hues of marvellous loveliness. And as it grows older, the stormy elements seem to visit its hoary decrepitude with kindlier touch from day to day, till it sinks sleepily into the scene, and becomes absorbed in the all-pervading beauty "whose world-wide empire never wanes." No wonder that the heart of man should cling to such homes as these, steeped as they are in the witchery of nature. But, when the mind turns from these "huts where poor men lie" to the back slums and cellar-dwellings of Manchester and Liverpool, the contrast is appalling. In those feverish dens the air is thick with misery, and death has no rest from his labours. Here, the poor live long, and are comparatively happy, for they live simply; and nature laps their lowly estate in sweet influences. There,

Dangers stand thick upon the ground,
To drag us to the tomb.

One thing that Ballintray lacks to make it look picturesque is sylvan greenery. There is not a tree in it, nor about it. Even a little ivy trailing here and there would relieve the glare of its white walls, and beautify the general appearance of the place. The life of the village is of a very quiet kind, and the inhabitants seem steeped in the dreamy sadness of the sea. Their talk is chiefly of the fishing, the crops, and the wild ocean, with smatterings of news from the busy world in the distance. In summer, a few visitors relieve the scene with a little freakish change; but, during the rest of the year, there is no flutter in its life, except such as the stormy elements awake; and when the sea is

calm, the voices of children at play upon the shore come up the cliffs, like the sound of "ducks wheetlin' amang meat." The little bay is so shut in that scarcely anything of the coast can be seen from it. It looks right out to sea, and every passing vessel is an object of interest. There is almost always something in sight upon the watery highway—great steamers plying between Glasgow and Londonderry; Sligo boats; the Islay steamer, from Glasgow to Portrush, and then through the Hebrides, and back the same way; Canadian steamers, on their way to Lough Foyle, or homeward-bound across the Atlantic; strange sails, looming dim in the offing, and small craft skimming by the mouth of the bay; and, now and then, a collier comes into the port, from Scotland; or a man-of-war goes ploughing by, with the union jack fluttering in the wind. Ballintray is a coast-guard station, too—with half a dozen men or so—and even this seems to give a touch of importance to this little marine nest, and as the men pace the shore in their breezy man-o'-war garb, they seem to be always keeping a watchful eye upon the sea, as if a French fleet was expected upon that part of the coast every hour. I like to chat with these coast-guardsmen. The chief boatman is an experienced old man-o'-war's man, and the men pay him as much deference as if he were an admiral. He lets me look through his great glass at the passing vessels; and he shows me his cottage, and his garden, and the arms of the station, all sharp and bright, and ready for action.

On the north-east side of the bay there is a modern mansion, surrounded by a wide space of green but treeless land. It is a large yellow-washed building, of no particular style of architecture that I can describe. The shore folk call it "The Castle." There is a little anecdote connected with this house which shows something of the nature of the tides on this coast. Last summer, "The Castle" was tenanted by an English nobleman, and, during that time, his lordship's butler and his valet took a boat from Ballintray, with the intent of visiting the Giant's Causeway—which is about two miles off. But, being inexperienced boatmen, they were carried away by the tide, far eastward, into the dangerous channel called Slunk-na-marra, which divides the isle of Rathlin from Ballycastle, where they were picked up, and their boat taken in tow, by a collier on its way to Londonderry. The collier having brought them back till they were once more opposite to Ballintray, from whence they set out, they insisted upon taking to the boat again, feeling confident of their ability to reach the shore, which was less than a mile off. The captain of the collier having given them sufficient warning, they took to their boat, and the two vessels parted company. Away went the collier towards Derry, but the unfortunate boatmen, after struggling hard to reach their home, which was full in sight before them, were once more carried far away to sea, by a tide running to the northward; and were ultimately picked up, in a terrible state of exhaustion, by a Canadian vessel, homeward-bound, and were taken forward by it to Montreal, Canada. In the meantime, week after week went by, and no tidings came of either the boat or the men. The whole country-side gave them up as lost; and their friends mourned them as dead. The nobleman paid for the lost boat, and left the place; for still week after week went by, and nothing could be heard of his two old servants. After some time, however, the wanderers returned, and the butler found his wife and family clad in mourning weeds. Such was the story which went the round of the papers at the time—such, indeed, was the fact, for I was living within two miles of Ballintray when the thing first befel.

A green ridge divides Ballintray from the mouth of the river Bush, and from Bosca's magic strand; but, as I shall come round to that nook of the shore again farther on, I will now return to the high road, which leaves the coast a little near this point. As we pass Knock-an-chick, or the Gallows Hill of Dunluce, the landward scene is interesting. About three miles distant, the dark headlands of the Causeway shut out of sight the coast beyond. A little nearer, Coleman's hotel occupies the head of a green slope commanding a fine view of sea and shore, with the wild mountains of Donegal in the dim background. About a mile from the hotel, Dundarave, the seat of Sir Edmund McNaughton, stands upon a fine undulant upland, surrounded by green woods and lawny lands; and in the far south-east the round top of Knocklade overlooks all the intervening landscape. At the foot of the Dundarave grounds the town of Bushmills nestles upon the banks of the stream from which it takes its name. It is a clean little town, consisting almost entirely of one street of whitewashed houses and shops; it has two inns, and several smaller places where whisky is sold; it has an enclosed market-place, with a public clock; a court-house; one large distillery; two flax mills, upon the Bush—from which it gets the name of Bushmills—and it has the usual places of worship, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Wesleyan. Bushmills is chiefly notable for whisky, salmon, and Orangemen. The "Bushmills dew" is justly celebrated; and, of course, it is an affront to ask in Bushmills for the whisky of any other distillery. The river Bush has a peaty hue, but is full of picturesque windings and pretty falls; and, for its length and volume, it is an excellent salmon stream. All the world knows that Antrim is an Orange land. There are several Orange lodges in that town; and on the twelfth of July the little place is as gay as a Lancashire Rushbearing, with ribbons, and banners, and Orange lilies, and holiday folk from all the country round. There are some Freemasons in Bushmills, too. Some years ago I fell in with an interesting old mason here. In his youth he had seen a good deal of the world afar off; and he was a man of more than ordinary intelligence and information, with a genial disposition, and a rich vein of humour. Many a time I have listened to his quaint snatches of song and story. I remember one of his songs in which the children of a brother of the mystic tie are described as going about the house, clapping their hands, and singing, "My daddy's a freemason, an' we needna fear the deil." Age and infirmity have driven the genial old humorist into the chimney corner at last, where I hope he may pass the evening of his days in comfort,

> Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
> His old grey hairs.

Bushmills is about two miles from the Giant's Causeway; and in summer time, "Causeway guides" may be met with, in straggling detachments along the road, lying in wait for visitors, like skirmishers thrown out by an hostile army. These guides are generally stout, active fellows, and good boatmen. They are not remarkable for ready wit, but they possess a certain kind of slow, sly humour, more characteristic of the Scotch than the native Irish; and their geological discourses are very amusing. "Do you intend this lad of yours to be guide?" said I to a poor woman, one day. "Och, no, dear," replied she, "Och, no; that's the last thing of a'! The life o' a guide is a sair scattered thing, tak' it a'thegither. Puir fellows, they ha' nae certainty ava! In summer time it's a' chops an' steaks, an' mutton, an' tay, an' whisky; an' when the winter comes, they're just as bare 's the snow i' the dyke—it's a sleepin', an' shiverin', an' starvin', till the time gaes roun'. Och, no; guid send my poor bairn readier meat than a runnin' hare!"

And now we have ridden through Bushmills, and up the long slope which is so finely shaded by the trees of Dundarave woods; we have passed "the Fingers," where another road branches off towards Ballycastle; and we are down in the hollow called Ardevonnan, within a quarter of a mile of the Giant's Causeway; but, before we visit that far-famed scene, let us turn aside on the left hand road for a short distance, and take a peep at a nook of the shore, called Craig dhu, or Black Rock.

Black Rock is the name given to a little lonely bay, between Ballintray and the Causeway. There is a strand at Black Rock—"Bosca's magic strand"—upon which many a good ship has gone to wreck. Not long ago, a steamer called the Arbutus ran aground there, and was left high and dry by the retiring tide. At one end of the strand the Bush empties its peaty waters into the sea; and in fine weather people come from the neighbouring village and sit upon the bank, watching the salmon ascend the shallow stream. At the other end of the strand, and partly in the sea, there is a dark cluster of jagged rocks—hence the name, Black Rock—and, in stormy weather, the sea completely drenches this sombre mass in foam and spray. In a nook of these sea-beaten rocks there is a low, stone-built hut, where the salmon-fishers dwell during the fishing season. They dry their nets upon the neighbouring bank, and their boats are sheltered in a little creek hard by. A few years ago, the fishery there was managed by a Scotchman, of the name of Knox, who dwelt alone in the hut at Black Rock. At last, he was drowned in the bay. The first night after the body was found, and whilst it lay in the lonely hut, awaiting burial, robbers crept in at the little window, and stepping over the dead man's body, which lay beneath it, they set fire to part of his bed-straw, and by its light they stript the place of everything worth carrying away. This anecdote, which I had heard often before, was told to me again lately by the fishers at Black Rock, as we sat together one stormy night in the hut where the thing

took place. About five hundred yards from the fishing hut, a pretty little "burn" comes whimpling down to the wild ocean, between banks of wild flowers; and near the spot where its waters join the sea, the roofless walls of an old corn mill and the ruins of a little cottage stand in neighbourly decay, low down in a green crevice, close to the stream. In that ruined cottage, whose smoke-blackened rafters are now open to the skies, there once dwelt old Dan Graham, a fisherman, with his wife and four grown-up sons, who were fishermen also. One stormy night, about five years ago, the old fisherman's four sons were returning homeward from sea, when the boat was capsized in Black Rock bay, and they were all drowned within sight of their own hearth-light. They were so near their home, in fact, that the old man hailed them, almost from his own door, and was answered by them, as they struggled among the fatal waves. They were all drowned; and there was wild sorrow in the old fisherman's childless hut that night. I remember calling at the cottage a few days after the melancholy event. The aged mother sat by the turf fire, with her head bound up in a cloth, and swaying herself to and fro, in speechless sorrow. The voice of the hungry sea had an awful sound in that silent cottage, which was hung round with fishing tackle which would know its owners no more. The old fisherman survived his sons about two years; but, as the shore-folk say, "he was never the same man," and he used to sit for hours together upon the spot where his sons were drowned. His widow is still living "a poor lonesome pilgrim," as she said to me the other day, wandering about the Causeway, selling "specimens" to visitors. Such are the stories one meets with in every nook of the sea-shore.

Our hint of woe
Is common: every day some sailor's wife,
The masters of some merchant, and the merchant
Have just our theme of woe.

And now, in the words of my quaint old friend, McSalmon, the fisherman, let me conclude with—

Life to man, and death to fish;
The boat, the creel, the plough;
Horn, corn, lint, and ling,
Flax, an' tarry woo;
An' ornamintal bad luck to them that hasna' the heart to like folk!

A WAGER AT BEN LANG'S.

Hitherto we have been disposed to look upon one of Mr. Dickens's subsidiary characters—the man who combined the occupation of a funereal mute with the feat of eating two geese for a wager, as a personage as mythical as Mrs. Harris herself. After reading the following bill, which we found exhibited in a conspicuous place this week, with a plated cup beside it, we feel disposed to modify our opinion on the subject. Here it is:—

VICTORIA MUSIC HALL.
Friday, August 27.
For the Benefit of Ceda Christy Minstrels.

This cup will be given away to the person who will eat one pound of treacle and three penny cakes in the shortest time; and also one pound of tobacco, to the person who will smoke a quarter of an ounce of tobacco in the shortest time.

Names to be left within.

We had imagined that such disgusting barbarities had been confined to some remote country villages where some rude ancient sports still lingered, or to some of the roughest spots in the Potteries. It seems, however, that we were mistaken, and that such abominable sights are to be witnessed in the heart of this city, within a stone's throw of the cathedral. As we read the bill, we thought of the gaping geese entertainment of last year, and of the catastrophe which occurred on the same evening. We are not superstitious, and, as we write this before the entertainment comes off, we sincerely trust that no accident will occur on this occasion. Nevertheless we must admit that, should any of the performers or spectators at the exhibition be choked during its performance, we cannot say that they would be deserving of much sympathy.

SPORTING INTELLIGENCE.

Kingcraft won the Convivial Stakes at York on Wednesday in a canter, and is now first favourite for next year's Derby. His namesake is also in force for the throne of Spain.

ST. MICHAEL'S AND ITS RECTOR.

[THE REV. G. S. ALLEN.]

WE had often seen from the railway incline between Hunt's Bank and Miles Platting a church with a remarkably stiff-necked looking tower, which somehow seemed to stand alone, notwithstanding its brick and mortar surroundings, and to be without visible means of approach—"remote, unfriended, melancholy." We could learn little about it from the casual fellow-passenger beyond the fact that it was St. Michael's. St. Michael's! How many varied associations were called up by that name! Oranges delicious of flavour, pipless, easily and gratefully consumed. The Mount! St. Michael's Mount, the subject and delight, as also the *crux* of many a sea and landscape painter, rearing its crowned summit into a sky of such different aspect to that which canopies our St. Michael's. Now the sight of this edifice, guarded by high walls, declivities impassable, and work-yards, and apparently impervious to human foot, awoke our pedestrian combativeness, and we made a secret but firm determination to reach the sacred fane, notwithstanding that close by

Irk the dirty river ran
Through mud-banks never cleansed by man,
Down to

whither we should not care to follow it.

Having carefully consulted our map, we found that two streets seemed to lead to the place. But what streets! From Rochdale Road there was Angel Street, by repute Angel Meadow! And to the south side the road was through Charter Street! As we could by no means reckon on Charter Street as a thoroughfare, and preferred to continue possessor of our handkerchief and eyeglass, we strolled down the "Meadow." As it was a warm Sunday evening, all the population had poured into the street. The women and girls sat on the steps, the men leaned against the walls as only Irishmen can lean, and the youngsters sprawled in the gutter, contending for the cabbage stalks and "orts" with which the ground was nearly covered. No other place being available, a knot of old women had gathered in earnest conversation in the middle of the road. We overheard, in passing, one of the old ladies say playfully to another, that she "would turrun anny way for a gill o' beer," that being evidently the most contemptible bribe that could be offered. Altogether, it seemed like a bit of "the Liberty" which had been wonderfully wafted over from Dublin.

Arrived at the church, we found that the Cathedral "hour" was followed, instead of the customary half-past six. We had therefore leisure to look about us. St. Michael's stands about half way down what could once be called a ravine, having the Irk at the bottom, the opposite bank rising still more steeply to the Cheetham Hill Road. There is a spacious burial ground, now disused, round the church, and an old public cemetery now closed and walled round, stands like a large *annexe* to the north side. Soon after taking our seat the service was begun. The curate, whom we have a strong notion of having seen somewhere near the Grammar School, read the prayers. He seemed to have endeavoured to avoid any suspicion of "intoning" on the one hand, and of "grease" on the other, but only succeeded in being dry and matter-of-fact. He was certainly clear and distinct, and we supposed we ought to have felt content. But we didn't. The musical part of the service was done by a limited number of young men and maidens ranged in an organ gallery, near a tolerable organist, who played a fair instrument. The singing merely aimed at being congregational. The congregation, sparse, as befitted a warm summer evening, seconded the efforts of the choir most literally, coming in "a good second" at the end of each verse. We may note that *hymns ancient and modern* are used, and that the Psalms are chanted. In the morning service we believe they are read.

The sermon was preached by the Rector, the Rev. G. S. Allen, M.A. He has been, we learnt, lately appointed to this church by the Cathedral Chapter, and, as far as we could judge, they have certainly this time "blundered into sense." Mr. Allen, though a Yorkshireman, retains little or nothing of the almost indelible accent of that province, or possibly has exchanged it for a very small portion of the Northumbrian "burr," contracted probably at Durham, of which University he was a Fellow, and brought thence his degree. The discourse was read from the manuscript, and was well delivered considering that it was from the

height of a huge "three-decker." It was a lecture framed upon a well-known old-fashioned model, and evidently the preacher's own composition; and although we should judge it to be—nay, because it was—the work of a gentleman and a scholar in theology as well as classics, it was not "over the heads" of the people listening, but well within the compass of their intelligence. After this twenty-five minutes worth was over, the offertory, now becoming quite an institution, was collected by some half-dozen most respectable and churchwardenly looking individuals, and we were at liberty shortly *evadere ad auras*, and passing unhurt through the perils of Charter Street, we soon resumed the even tenour of our way.

As a little incident showing the state of society near the place of our pilgrimage, we may mention that during last winter, and for some time previous, it was the custom of the neighbours to throw stones in at the church windows during evening service, for the purpose probably of showing their contempt for the "Prodestants." This practice is now abandoned, either from a consciousness of "justice to Ireland" now having been done, or in deference to the wishes of two gentlemen whom we could occasionally see from our pew walking leisurely to and fro alongside the church, the beams of the evening sun glancing from the glazed crowns of their hats!

Seriously, the parish or district of St. Michael's is for the most part disreputable, nay, vile in the extreme. All honour, then, to those both cleric and lay, that can be found to work in such a part of their Master's vineyard.

TOWN TALK,

AND THINGS IN GENERAL.

LONDON CRITICS AND MANCHESTER PLAYGOERS.

THE *Daily News* has been writing very foolishly, for the second time about trying new dramatic pieces on provincial audiences. It observes that Mr. Buckstone has been trying Mr. Tom Taylor's new play upon us, "before submitting it to the more anxious test of a London performance." Anxious fiddle-de-dee! Whoever heard of a play being damned at the Haymarket Theatre? It will be remembered that this is the same paper which a little while ago called us, by inference, a *corpus vile* on which to *fiat* the dramatic *experimentum*. Perhaps it is the same writer. At all events, it does not need his assurance that the object of the new play is to contrast old and new men, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter, to show that the writer has not the least idea what he is writing about. If the *Daily News's* dramatic reputation is to equal its reputation on other subjects, it must cease to speak of an audience which makes *Joan of Arc* and *The Military Billy Taylor* run a hundred nights as being a "more anxious test" than one which damned them both at sight.

THE THEATRES.

As the Haymarket Company are going to return to us, we shall probably have another representation of *A Managing Mamma;* so we defer our criticism of that comedy. On their revisit Mr. Compton is to take a benefit, on which occasion *Money* will most likely be performed. At the Prince's Theatre the *Gnome King* has been replaced by the *Field of the Cloth of Gold*, a capital burlesque, which goes with immense spirit, and is thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. Indeed if this piece had been produced on the first night of the Brough Company's appearance, and *Joan of Arc* had been entirely withheld, we believe the result of the engagement would have been very different, and much more satisfactory to all concerned. Mr. Brough has brought together a company of excellent actors, whose abilities during their stay in Manchester have shone quite as conspicuously in comedy and farce as in the extravaganza. Two of Mr. Brough's comediettas, *Kind to a Fault*, and *How to Make Home Happy*, both, by the way very clever and entertaining pieces, have been admirably performed.

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

The privileges of subscribers to the Botanical Gardens seem to be undergoing a process of gradual curtailment. Last year a subscription ticket gave admittance to two flower shows; this season, by some unhappy blundering, the subscribers were deprived of one show, and the show itself robbed of half its beauty and attraction. Last year, subscribers were on alternate Saturdays allowed to introduce friends to the musical promenade. Such privilege is now only granted at long intervals. Notwithstanding these considerations, the promenades continue to be well attended. We suppose that it is too much to expect that the respectability of all the visitors should be accurately ensured. Still since these promenades are nothing if not respectable, in the outward and worldly sense, all possible pains should be taken to keep a close watch over the sort of promenaders admitted. Last Saturday we saw well dressed females taking part in the promenade, whose claims to the distinction of social respectability could not have been very strongly insisted on. On more than one previous occasion, the fact of the presence of such persons has been mentioned to us. If by incurring a little extra expense, to procure the services of competent doorkeepers. the admission of such dangerous visitors can be avoided, it will certainly be a penny wise and pound foolish economy on the part of the powers that be, to neglect such a necessary precaution.

CURIOSITIES OF THE "BLACKPOOL HERALD."

At first sight such a journal as the *Fleetwood Chronicle and Blackpool Herald, Lytham Gazette and Fylde Advertiser*—for in such a batch of titles does the paper rejoice—may not seem a very promising subject of study. But who shall say that amusement, not to mention instruction, may not be derived even from Bradshaw, or from a commercial directory? The curious and apparently uninteresting List of Visitors, with its advertisement interpolations in recommendation of pills or photographs, contains representatives of every social grade, from the Earl and Countess of Ellesmere to male and female operatives from Bolton, Blackburn, and Bury. The houses seem to share these distinctions of rank even in name. Belvedere and Portobello Houses evidently soar (nominally) into the gentle regions of fashion and aristocracy, whilst the Original Yorkshire Cottage savours of the humble and homely. Most of the householders and lodging-house keepers appear to be either spinsters or widows, unless indeed it is considered good policy to keep husbands in the background for the nonce. These unhappy letters of apartments evidently share the opinion of our great dramatic poet as to the want of any peculiar virtue in a name, otherwise how in the name of all that is euphonious are we to account for the perpetuation of such hostesses as Miss Jolly, Miss Wincup, Mrs. Butcher, Mrs. Bonny, Mrs. Boote, Mrs. Lote, Mrs. Backs, Mrs. Wiggins, and Mrs. Scragg. Surely the tuneful muses never heard the enumeration of so tuneless a nine. Nor are such peculiarities confined to residents. A very hasty perusal amongst the visitors gives us Mr. Pickles, Mrs. Crank, Miss Chier, and Master Conkey. Some confident in unadorned beauty can afford to despise titles of mere courtesy, and write themselves Joseph Hollinrake and Silvia Walker. Many curious geographical problems could be raised by perusal of a single column. Mrs. Smith comes from Traugh, whilst John Dixon claims Idle as his dwelling-place. How many readers will undertake to tell off-hand where these places are? One gentleman describes himself as from Rio Janiero; the Misses Fletcher give the comprehensive, if somewhat vague, address North America, whilst Mr. Timothy Potts hails from Tipperary. But perhaps the most startling curiosity in the paper is the enumeration amongst the visitors (we take the liberty of altering the name) of *Miss* Parks *and Daughter*. Surely some one has blundered.

SUSSEX *v.* LANCASHIRE.

It seems to be an impossibility, physical and moral, that Lancashire should win a cricket match away from home. Last week the County sustained another defeat at Brighton, at the hands of the Sussex eleven. Thus we have won the home, and lost the return match against both the Surrey and the Sussex. When we add to this statement defeats in both games with the Gentlemen of Warwickshire, by a simple arithmetical process, we discover that out of six county matches, Lancashire has won two and lost four—a balance which certainly leaves us nothing to be particularly proud of. Even this list does not include a complete enumeration of the county's cricketing disasters, for it omits the defeat by the Marylebone Club. Comparing the two elevens, who played last week, with those of the teams who met some time ago at Old Trafford, we find that the chief alteration in the Sussex is the introduction of two amateurs, Messrs. C. H. Smith and Winslow. The changes on our side were more numerous, and serious enough to alter the county eleven

almost beyond recognition. The difficulty invariably experienced in finding the leading amateurs at once able and willing to go far from home, seems on this occasion to have acted with more than usual force. Messrs. Hornby, Appleby, Rowley, and Wright, were conspicuous by their absence; whilst the prior claims of Yorkshire, which needed his assistance in fighting Nottinghamshire, robbed us of the services of that tower of strength—Roger Iddison. When we add to this formidable list of the "missing," the name ot Cornelius Coward, who was unable from illness to play during the greater part of the match, little astonishment can be felt at the result. Messrs. Bousfield, Hulton, and Seymour, constituted the amateur element. The last named gentleman, who plays with the Bowdon Club, made two useful scores of twenty and twenty-five. Amongst the professional players, Marchbank, if we mistake not, a Preston man, distinguished himself by getting what we saw described in a sporting paper as a pair of spectacles; Hickton had the same marks affixed to his name, though one innings was a "not out; and Burrows made the highest average score on his side. But what many will regard as the most extraordinary feature in the match is, that in one innings Reynolds made twenty-six runs. It is, perhaps, scarcely fair to regard such a score as mere evidence of the power of good luck.

MR. SWINBURNE ON COLERIDGE.

Mr. C. A. Swinburne, the author of *Atalanta*, has done a priceless service to the students and lovers of poetry by his essay on Coleridge. Though so brief that it may be read in half an hour, it is by far the finest criticism ever written on the author of the *Ancient Mariner*, and it will be returned to, again and again, with constantly increasing pleasure. We must confess that we are not admirers of Mr. Swinburne's poetry; we do not like what the able critic of *Temple Bar* calls his "rampant Schneiderism." His imagination is to us "as foul as Vulcan's stithy." But if he would only write always as he has written about S. T. Coleridge, we would forget, if we could not forgive, the uses to which he has put his really great poetic faculty. His estimate of Coleridge is high. To him he is "the greatest of lyric poets; his poetry, at its highest, is beyond all praise and all words of men. The *Christabel*, the *Kubla Khan*, with one or two more, are outside all law and jurisdiction of ours. When it has been said that such melodies were never heard, such dreams never dreamed, such speech never spoken, the chief thing remains unsaid and unspeakable. There is a charm upon these poems which can only be felt in silent submission of wonder. For absolute melody and splendour it were hardly rash to call *Kubla Khan* the first poem in the language. An exquisite instinct married to a subtle science of verse has made it the supreme model of music in our language, a model unapproachable except by Shelley. All the elements that compose the perfect form of English metre, as limbs and veins and features a beautiful body of man, were more familiar, more subject as it were, to this great poet than to any other." So Mr. Swinburne runs on through the beauties of S. T. C., touching as finely and as discriminately on his defects, never forgetting that the mission of true criticism is to teach us how to admire *rightly*. His conclusion is this:—"As a poet, Coleridge's place is indisputable. It is high among the highest of all time. Other and stronger men, with fuller control and concentration of genius, may do more service, may bear more fruit; but such as his was they will not have it in them to give. The highest lyric work is either passionate or imaginative; of passion Coleridge has nothing; but, for height and perfection of imaginative quality, he is the greatest of lyric poets. This was his special power, and this is his special praise." Mr. Swinburne's essay is prefixed to a selection, arranged by himself, of Coleridge's poems, which forms one of the Bayard Series. Like all the volumes of that charming collection, it is exquisitely printed—in form and appearance a very luxury of type, paper, and binding—and it is published at a price which makes it a marvel, even in this age of cheap literature.

THE NEW ACT ON BEERHOUSES.

The first Brewster sessions after the passing of the new Beer Act prove that, in this neighbourhood at any rate, the magistrates are resolved to exercise their functions energetically. The cases are not multitudinous in which you can make people good by act of parliament; but if you can, by all means do. There can be no doubt that the abolition of many beerhouses means the abolition of much misery; for though the remaining ones would do a larger business than before, the trade done in the aggregate would certainly be less. We can't prevent the devil tempting people, but we needn't license him to take up an abode at every hundred yards. By no means do we advocate teetotalism, which is folly; but ubiquitous beerhouses mean drunkenness, which is vice. Whatever beerhouses may be theoretically, practically they are deadly plagues; and the man who makes his living out of other men's unhappiness has no right to sympathy, and ought to be abolished on the least irregularity.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW.

Mr. Bancroft, of the London and North-Western Railway Company, has called attention to a compensation case in which a passenger got £2,300 out of another company, for an accident sustained upon a journey for which the company received no less than the munificent sum of three times the eighth of a penny. It is not high-flown to call a fact like this trumpet-tongued. It is an example of the monstrous discrepancy between law and justice.

THE *SATURDAY REVIEW*.*

THE *Saturday Review* enjoys, upon the whole, a reputation built upon the fact that its essays were a welcome interruption to the prevailing dulness. Men are dull until they become interested, and nothing interests them so much as a cruel attack. Like boys at school their spirits are relieved by the accident of a quarrel, and universal cheerfulness is restored by the pleasant occupation of forming a ring. But a substantial objection to success of this sort is to be found in the fact that all attacks are alike, and that destructive criticism presents, as did the Battle of Waterloo, a terrible sameness. People, moreover, may get tired of rowdyism, and sick of clever vituperation, while the exhausted editor fondly believes that there is no reason why the supply should not continue indefinitely, because he thinks that the demand caused by the infinite Ill-nature of the public will be indefinitely continued too. A writer—or a set of writers if you will—who is so clever as to extract some reward, be it ever so dirty and small, from the cynical ill-nature of the whole of the reading upper class of England, is not likely to make its teachings so virtuous that the ill-nature which is so remunerative can no longer be appealed to. Nevertheless, we are Pelagian enough to trust in the goodness of the human heart, and to believe that in a far-off day the demand for Laodicean teachings, sceptic enquiries, subtle damnations clothed in meagre praises, half-hearted faith and cowardly denial, cruel attacks and miserable, because most mean suggestions will die away, and the supply of the literary poison will cease.

With the exception of the last clause—and it would be absurd to suppose that the *Saturday* would admit writing expressing such wild beliefs—the reader of the *Sphinx* has just been reading the *Saturday Review*. From attacks on the Lords, the Americans, John Bright, and the Pope, we have gathered sentences—like bricks from Babylon—to show the style of our friend, and have, we hope, so fine drawn the edges as to make them of one piece. You have there "words, words, words"—for the sense in the original is not so generous—collocated exactly as the pet writers of the *Saturday* all wont. Its political articles are curious; they are prophetic, after the style of Zadkiel; they say something and say nothing. Let us take a specimen. How often do we read such stuff as this? "If Bismarck succeeds in gaining the consent of the King, and thereby drawing together the whole of Germany, he may inspire the scattered portions of fatherland with one idea, and he will indeed have a magnificent Empire, of which he may claim to be the founder, not less than was Alexander. But if, as it seems probable, Austria should attract the youth of, &c." Plainly, if he succeeds he succeeds; if he don't he don't. What platitudes all these! Two and two make four, but if you take two away—thank you, good master Holofernes, we hardly need be taught *that*.

But we must concede that, on the whole, the *Saturday* is a clever

* The *Saturday Review* has already appeared in our series of articles on the "London Papers" (see *Sphinx*, No. 19, Novr. 28th, 1868). This second estimate, however, is written from a different point of view, though in a spirit entirely consistent with our previous notice.

paper, and one that deserves its popularity, taking popularity as no high thing. Emerson says very truly of the English, "they are the best of actual nations, but see to what an end the best is arrived." So we may say of the *Saturday*, with the exception of the *Spectator* in its way, and High Church *Guardian* (of London), and the *City Press* in their way, the *Saturday* is the best paper we have, but bad is the best. Its dominant airs are insufferable. It speaks, acts, and attitudinizes like a college don—that is as if it were the *ne plus ultra*, the highest court, the journalistic House of Lords from which there were no appeal. There was a true story at Oxford of one of the heads of houses who travelled abroad with his wife, one of those high-nosed, well-bred British females who disgust and astonish all the foreign world, and who have occasioned those wonderful caricatures people grin at in the Boulevard or the *passages des orors*. This *nova nupta* in the frigid wedding tour which succeeded coming one day to the diligence, saw the *coupé* occupied by another English couple. "Please," said the lady, "are you aware this is our place." "Don't know, I'm shaw," lisped the happy groom of a pretty middle-class English girl, who peeped out of the *coupé*, ready, like any British female, to support her husband, "I'm shaw that my wife and I engaged this place three days ago—and *we mean to keep it.*" "Sir," cried the other, "you will repent your rudeness, and instantly get down for my husband!" "And who is your husband," cried the pretty bride: "this is Mr. Spofforth, of the Inner Temple." Yes, it was Spofforth, Q.C., with whose name the West Circuit rings. "Pshaw!" cried the enraged one from the pavement, giving an infuriated glance at the pretty bride, peeping like a swallow from her nest, "my husband is Dr. Waddilump, MASTER OF ST. BLAZINS!" Contrary to her expectations, the *coupé* did not blow up; Spofforth did not get down. "Very sorry, I'm shaw; would oblige a lady, but really his wife must be consulted, I'm shaw," &c. The earth did not open, and Dr. Waddilump *was* obliged to sing small, and not get the other Briton arrested. But when he got back to his college was he not as donnish as ever? Of course. The *Saturday*, written too often by women and mere boys, assumes the don in literature on account of its position. There it is: it must pronounce.

In 1855, when the *Saturday* was first established, there was a want of such a work. Mr. Douglas Cook, perhaps the most skilful editor we have ever had, who knew his men, selected his writers, and suggested his subjects, with consummate judgment (he now lies buried at Sintagel), was before that editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, upon which he had employed Henry Mayhew as a commissioner with the poor, and elsewhere. The *M. C.* was like our *Daily News*—too clever; it did not take; it did not pay; everybody said it was clever, but it had fallen, in forty years, from the very first place, much above that of the *Times*, to a very bad second or third. Cook became acquainted with Mr. Beresford-Hope, a rich, somewhat high, churchman, and a man of great taste. The publisher selected for the newspaper was Mr. J. H. Parker, of Oxford and London; it was to be essentially critical; to be scholarly, and utterly superior to anything else. Douglas Cook took with him his best writers, and imported into the press work a number of parsons, some of them very good writers, many of them very virulent and careless. Mr. Cook's "circus" did not get on very well with amateurs; one might as well try to fill all the parts in a theatre that way. He soon called in the Bokeman fraternity of writers, but on an introduction he always took care to ask, "Pray, sir, from what university do you hail?" or, "Might I ask what is your college?" What he wanted got abroad. The *Saturday* was said to be written entirely by university men. It blundered egregiously, but was always so scholarly. It showed a great deal of clerical spite, and, when Charles Kingsley was made Professor of History at Cambridge, an opponent who wrote in the *Saturday* so belaboured him that he feels sore to this day. It became, this paper, essentially iconoclastic. It would have lifted its pen against Shakespere had it had sufficient power, or had not Douglas Cook, a Bohemian *pur sang*, and yet thoroughly a gentleman *pur sang* too, loved gentle Will too much; but it fell foul of Fielding, sneered at Scott, threw aside Smollett, pitched into Thackeray, and tore many rents in the garments of Dickens. Therein it was undoubtedly right. Dickens has an immense genius, but a conceit and ignorance large enough to balance *that* balloon, at any rate. So the *Saturday* did him good, though it did not prevent him, when a dinner was given him in honour of English literature, quoting himself three times, and saying no word about English letters.

Then the *Saturday* attacked men less and men greater than he; demolished Miss Braddon, and ran its steel pen right through and through a certain decent and respectable old Balloon called Martin Tupper. It has become too common to slay the slain now. Mr. Tupper died like Cæsar. Nothing became him in his literary life like the leaving of it. He answered neither with spite nor rage. He might well have been proud of his fame, for, of course, he had the blind vanity of authors, and did not know that his book *Proverbial Philosophy*, a coarse imitation of Dodsley's *Economy of Human Life*, with a dash of the Proverbs of Solomon, owed its popularity to human weakness and ignorance. Of Tupper we would say, as Hamlet does of Polonius (also a proverbial philosopher) when he says that he played Cæsar and Brutus slew him in the capital, "'Twere a Brute shame to slay so capital a calf." A more reprehensible custon of the *Saturday* was and is its attacks upon young authors. It did not select its books for the purpose of pleasing the author, nor of illustrating the subject, nor of reviewing the book, but for the sole purpose of making a spicy, amusing article that a lumpy-headed city man in a first-class carriage would grin over. In this it has succeeded. But how many authors has it crushed in the contemptible process?

The staff of the *Saturday* was always an unusually large one, but its regular writers were, on that account, still well employed. For months it lost money, but at last turned the corner, and made it rapidly. Few editors could have whipped together so brilliant a team as to give every week from twenty to five-and-twenty noticeable articles. In addition to Mr. Beresford-Hope, Mr. Douglas Cook, and his very industrious subeditor, now the editor, Mr. Philip Harwood, the principal writers were Mr. H. Sumner Maine, now in India and on the Supreme Council, the Rev. Mr. Sandars, the Rev. Mr. Scott, Lord Strangford, and Mr. John Oxenford. Others less employed were Mr. L. Jennings, now on the *Times*, Mr. Friswell, the Countess of Salisbury, the Rev. Mr. Green, Mrs. Lynn Linton, Mr. Pearson, the Rev. Mr. Webb, and a hundred others less known. A great many of these gentlemen still write for it.

The *Saturday Review* always manages to hurt and wound, not to elevate and amuse. It is to be pitied, perhaps, rather than condemned. If it is a giant in intellect—and in points it is so—it does not know how excellent it is to use its strength like a generous giant; not like a spiteful dwarf. Its principal tactic was, of course, attack. It set out "*debellare superbos*," but not to raise the weak. It was not even like Pope's Atticus—our fat smooth friend Joseph Addison—who

> Without sneering taught the rest to sneer.

for the *Saturday* sneered right and left. Poor John Bull had scarcely a rag left to cover him. "No place was sacred, not the church was free" from the open and saucy talk of this chartered libertine of the Press. However, by this it did much good. Against the wholesale conceit of such men as Dr. Cumming and Mr. Spurgeon—towards the latter of whom the *Saturday* has always had a leaning—its shafts broke innocuously; but upon the clergy of the church, upon the dignitaries of the establishment, and upon people less forcible and pachydermatous, its shafts had some effect. Its articles on French and German literature, its essays as a whole, its dramatic literature, and its sporting articles, in which it "comes out strong," did credit to journalism. Its political articles are of no distinct shade, but are shot with Conservatism, while the pervading tone of them is a gentlemanly Liberalism. They are often ridiculous, from a Johnsonian and antithetical swing (a pause and cœsura in the sentences) which promises much and says nothing. If a man is so heavy and weighty in prime thought that he can write like Sir Thomas Browne, there is no better style going than the Johnsonese that was formed by the Doctor on Sir Thomas. When the English men-at-arms rode down the Genoese archers, and the French knights who defended them, heavy horse-armour was proper and admirable. But it would scarcely do to put a spider-legged modern, only fit to mount a velocipede on a Flemish charger, as big as our dray horses, covered with steel. Old gentlemen sleep over the *Saturday's* political articles, and, able to deduce nothing. think that the writers are profound. It puts, also—and in this it is cunning, for it knows the world—its worst articles in the largest type. This imposes upon all but the knowing ones, who generally skip the flabby bombast, and run on to the spicy abuse of men and women, and the selfish and Laodicean exposition of morals and motives to be found

in the centre, in small type. There, also, are the richest diggings of purely literary articles, some of which are admirable.

Since Mr. Douglas Cook's death, the *Saturday* has manifestly deteriorated. Many ladies, we hear, now write for it, and ofttimes it is terribly and heavily dull, which the *Spectator* never is, and which quality is only relished in rich fools, never in poor newspapers. For the *raison d'être* of the *Saturday* is, that it should amuse. It does not care to elevate or to teach. If it ceases to be amusing, therefore, it dies.

BROOKS'S BAR

AND ITS VICINITY.

AN interval of ten years in the suburbs of a town like Manchester changes the aspect of things in a manner that exceeds belief. It is probable that one who has been absent for a time from such a suburban district, for instance, as Moss Side would, on revisiting it, have difficulty in realizing that the place was that which he once knew. One by one the old prominent objects disappear. If one land-mark more than another was fitted to endure for ever, it was Flint's Farm, with its low roof, old-fashioned white-washed walls, interspersed with black beams, and its spacious farm yard. Long it resisted the invader's attack. But now even it has succumbed, and its place will know it no more. The Twenty Pits, celebrated for very small fish called Jacksharps, and with a miserable notoriety for drowning reckless bathers, will soon be known only by tradition. Green fields have been transformed into straight streets, paved and drained, and filled with uniformly ugly houses. What is known in local slang as the "country," has removed further away from the city. True, Mee's Farm still exists, but it is shorn of much of its beauty, and an announcement on a painted board that its proprietor is licensed to let post-horses for hire, does not add to the rusticity of the associations. Hough's End Clough, with its murky brook, its bridges covered with illegible initials and half-carved names, and its wood dear to lovers, is also comparatively intact. But as certainly as the sun will rise and set to-morrow, its absorption is only a matter of time. The approach of destruction is even now suggested by the construction of a flat and hideously bare new road, on which a pedestrian has either to balance himself on the curb-stone, or to choose between a pathway of fine sand, or one of cinders and broken stones.

The origin of the name Brooks's Bar is obvious enough. Much of the growth of the wealthier and more select parts of the district is due to the late Mr. Samuel Brooks, whose land speculations in this as in other questions are said to have been fabulously successful. Great effects have been made to preserve the rural aspect of these quarters. A splendid avenue of trees shades Whalley Range, or "The Range," as it is called. The pretty church of St. Margaret, with its ivy-clad walls, looks almost rustic, and aids the delusion that the beholder is miles away from town. The Range is admirably adapted for a promenade, and on certain occasions, especially on Tuesday evenings, it is much used for sauntering purposes. Close to one end of Whalley Range is the Independent College, where the ideas of theological students are trained. The placid stillness of the locality agrees well with one's notions as to the atmosphere in which such an institution should thrive and grow, and affords as great a contrast as can be imagined to Quay Street and the surroundings of Owens College. Prominent amongst the numerous great houses is Manley Hall, the residence of one of the most successful of Manchester men. For the sake of exclusiveness, such extraordinary trouble has been taken in the way of diverting footpaths and building high walls, that littfe of the magnificent establishment is visible to one who passes close by. All the houses about the Range are large and extensive. From the fashion of their construction it is hard to see how the neighbourhood can continue other than very select, or can altogether lose its rusticity. Almost all the houses are detached, and are separated from each other by gardens or enclosures, more or less extensive. In glaring contrast to the apparent solidity of these houses are the rows of less pretentious dwellings on the Manchester side of Withington Road. These must surely be the triumph of 'Jerry" building. Fancy walls composed entirely of second-hand bricks!

Brooks's Bar is, as many Manchester people know, some distance from town, and the mode of conveyance thither is to all residents a matter of some importance. Various methods of travelling are in vogue. Some muscular people scorn to appeal for assistance to any other powers than such as have been given to them by nature, and walk. With these it is a favourite boast that they are prepared to race the slower vehicles, owing to their power of availing themselves of short cuts and no stoppages. At the other end of the scale are those who drive, are driven, or ride to town in their own carriages or drags, or on their own horses. But the great majority make use of omnibuses, conveyances which, from their cheapness, must always be popular, notwithstanding their numerous inconveniences. Travellers on the route are apt to boast of the superiority of the guards and drivers over those on other roads. They point with pride to the respectability of their appearance, and to the glorious freshness of the flower which invariably adorns the virtuous breasts of the officials on this line. In the same way the driver and guard of every 'bus impress upon inquirers the belief that their present team and turn out are the finest and most complete in the possession of their employers, and therefore in the city. They are unusually proud of their 'buses.

A special reason may be found for this loudly expressed self-approbation. For within a comparatively short time events of immense importance have happened, and fundamental changes have been attempted. A proposal on the part of Mr. Runrig, the proprietor of the 'buses, to raise the fares of course aroused instant opposition. Encouraged by this, a rival took the field, or rather the road. Secession raged rampant, and, for a time, the new 'buses with the old fares were very popular. Then came war to the knife. Mr. Runrig returned to his old prices, and every passenger became the subject of fierce contention between rival guards. The windows rattled with the shaking produced by racing conveyances. The express 'buses did, and still do, their utmost, by break-neck and reckless galloping, to run each other, or tardy foot passengers down, so as to reach the Bar, or the Exchange, half-a-dozen yards in front. Then the violence of revolutionary feeling gave way, and many returned to their old allegiance. It was found that the omnibuses of the new comer were not at all what they should be, that his management was from obvious reasons imperfect, and the service irregular and unpunctual. It is not conducive to good temper to find no vehicle ready at an appointed time, to discover that the cushions are damp with a penetrating moisture, or to break down in a hopeless fashion half-way to town, and immediately after the payment of fares.

The most wonderful ideas of regularity prevail in Bobson's establishment. No place is so out of the way, and no hour so late but what one of his 'buses may be heard shaking its way along in a purposeless fashion. How few of the original seceders remain faithful, except those ruled by a stern sense of duty, remembering the service undoubtedly rendered by opposition, or fearful of the consequences of rivalry should altogether cease. Strange rumours are often in circulation relating to some horrible accident which has happened to Bobson's property. If the stories of opposition officials are to be believed implicitly, which is doubtful, something terrible is always happening their enemies. One of the least exciting incidents to hear of is, that such and such a 'bus of Bobson's was last seen in the window of a butcher's shop. Manslaughter is, according to these story-tellers, quite an everyday occurrence, though we have never had conclusive proof of their statements. Nevertheless Bobson has admirers and warm friends who would on no account use any vehicle belonging to Runrig, and who assert that their man is rapidly acquiring a large fortune.

The notabilities and curiosities of Brooks's Bar and Moss Side are not by any means exhausted. We have, of course, a local board, which has achieved the usual success in laying on rates, and has, therefore, triumphantly built for itself a noble abode. Then there is a grand hotel, which is looked up to with something of awe, as having cost in its erection and fitting-up very large sums of money. Curious speculations are entered into as to how much a year is made or lost there. But probably the most remarkable place about Brooks's Bar is the Post Office; a small, low-roofed place, adjoining the Bar. It seems to be a general store, and combines the businesses of stationer, smallware dealer, tobacconist, and toffy-seller. Besides these, the proprietress is post-mistress and toll-bar keeper. It is not to be expected that perfect mildness of demeanour and serenity should be preserved in the midst of employments so multitudinous and trying. Possibly the hardening and quarrelsome influences of toll-bar keeping, are responsible for occasional severity of demeanour on the part of the presiding lady.

G. TWIGG'S Patent Corkscrews. The most powerful ever invented, and being provided with a patent India-rubber pad, which forms an elastic cushion for the neck, they are warranted not to break the bottle. Manufactory: 30, Mosley Road, Birmingham.—Sold by all Ironmongers.

DIDSBURY COLLEGE CHAPEL.

To the Editor of the Sphinx.

Sir,—Though not a member of the Wesleyan Society, I was much pleased with your article in last week's *Sphinx*, on Didsbury College. For many years I have longed to see the place, for I have heard and read a great deal about it. Being within four miles last Sabbath afternoon, I resolved to go to the evening service. I arrived a few minutes before the time, and ventured to go round a few of the walks. The grounds are charming. The College chapel is very plain, and not very large. When I entered I found a young man in the pulpit. He gave out the hymn with a great deal of self-importance, and his prayer seemed to me to be partly irreverent. His text was from Mark, 9th ch. and 46th verse,—"Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Having told us, in reference to Christ, that "never man spake like this man," he proposed to notice two characters that were doomed to eternal perdition, viz.: the unregenerate and the smooth tongued. In reference to the first he said they were so brainless that they would not believe in hell's torments, and the second smoothed it all over. He assured us that the texts of Wesley, the founder of their church, had been entombed too long, and it was time they were disinterred and fulminated against all smooth tongues. I have no wish to be hypercritical, but I must confess that though I have been in the habit of going to chapel for near sixty years, I was never so disgusted before. Instead of treating the subject in a calm, serious, and solemn manner, he appeared to rejoice in the thought that he was commissioned to send us all to eternal damnation. He was so demonstrative and offensive in his style, that one gentleman got up in the midst of the service and walked out. Others evidently wished him to close. I am convinced that such discourses, delivered to intelligent congregations, are productive of much evil. I am astonished that the authorities of the college should permit their pulpit to be occupied by one so well qualified to bring it into disgrace.—I am, sir, yours,

A Hater of Cant.

Birthplaces of Eminent Englishmen.—Chaucer, Sir Thomas More, Lord Bacon, Ben Jonson, Hampden, Milton, Penn, Pope, Sir William Blackstone, and John Howard, were born in London; Wykliffe, Wentworth, Marvel, Tillotson, Cook, and Wilberforce, in Yorkshire; Roger Bacon, Cabot, Blake, and Locke, in Somerset; Jewell, Drake, Raleigh, Marlborough, and Reynolds, in Devon; Walsingham, Newton, and Burleigh, in Lincolnshire; Harvey and Wolfe, in Kent; Coke, Nelson, and Walpole, in Norfolk; Clarendon and Addison, in Wilts; Chatham and Elliott, in Cornwall; Wolsey and Lyttelton, in Suffolk; Anson and Samuel Johnson, in Staffordshire; Cromwell and Dryden, in Hunts; Lowth and Watts, in Hants; Thomas Cromwell in Surrey; Latimer in Leicestershire; Garrick in Herefordshire; and Shakespere in Warwickshire.

A CYNICAL TOURIST IN SCOTLAND.

GRAND as Scotland is, it has its drawbacks; and pleasant as, under certain conditions, are many of the places in it in which your lines may fall, there are circumstances that may make them hard to you. Scotland is become most abominably cockney. What the diffusion of the Waverley Novels began, the expansion of steam travel has followed up. Not only does the worthy citizen, *blasé* of Sydenham slopes, sated of shrimps and Pegwell Bay, seat himself of an evening in the limited mail to breakfast next morning on Loch Fyne herrings in a Clyde steamer. Not merely do the manufacturing classes of the north of England, hot from their forges and fluffy from their spinning jennies, rush off to cool and air themselves in northern breezes, but the country has a shrewd, a money-making, and a pervertedly patriotic population of its own. It may be a lingering tradition of the times when money was too scarce and hard to come by to be lightly lavished away from home; it may be the economical idea of keeping down the expenses of your holiday by going the shortest way to take it, but it is certain the well-to-do Scotch hold very much to touring in their own country. Season after season sees them back in the same district as regularly as the salmon returns to his native stream.

If you chance to find yourself on the same beats in successive years, ten to one you seem to recognize the same faces, although, when features and characters are turned out so much of the same type, it is certainly possible you may be mistaken. Assuredly the world is wide enough for you and for many more, were each allowed to follow his own way; but that, unluckily, is impossible. In Scotland, especially, you are always being jumbled up, whether you like it or not, with distates that grow steadily into aversions. The places are generally unner-inned, and the coffee rooms are too often liliputian. Tea heavily weighted with chops—to our mind the abomination of abominations—is the popular meal, and it is made, in your despite, an unpleasantly social one. Arriving later than six, if you press for dinner, the waiter is apt to regard it as a personal outrage. We have ourselves been sternly refused it as violating the standing rul s of the house. A shock-headed attendant insists on linking you by a common teapot in a temporary brotherhood with the oleaginus and collarless divine you have made it your business to shun for a week past. The horrible meal hurried over, you feel constrained to digest it, and soothe your ruffled nerves and temper with a cigar, as by this time it has set in for the evening shower and is raining cats and dogs. You ask your way to the smoking-room that figures so prominently in the inn advertisement. You find yourself in a den where a utilitarian architect has revelled in economy of space. It reminds you of an Esquimaux hut hermetically sealed for the winter, and there in a vapour bath of tobacco and toddy, forced into the closest juxtaposition, you have an opportunity of improving your friendship with your Dissenting friend who has followed you thither. If you are more fortunate, you may find yourself one of an animated group of shopkeepers and bagmen, and listen to politics spiced with old Joe Millers with the points left out. Or possibly you may be a married man in your honeymoon, and in the morning may order a carriage for the next stage, proposing to divide your attentions between the charms of your bride and those of the country. It is more than likely you are told that private equipages are unattainable, and you are condemned to places among the company of the night before and their wives, in an open break, fenced against sun and weather, with poles and flying curtains; and this in the land of storms *par excellence*.

One might compromise for feeding and travelling with your fellows, if you were free between times to commune with solitude. The worst is, a greater than you has been before you, and "spotted" all the scenes that would inspire a poet's fancy or catch an artist's eye. Scott is to Scotland what Napoleon is to Europe. You are on his traces wherever you turn—Helen's Isle, Rob Roy's Cave, Coriskin, Cruachan—it is all the same. The bracken and the copses are bristling with pork-pie hats and billycocks; "Not for Joe" and "Up in a Balloon" come stealing softly across the dimpling wave.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

THE BOUCICAULT ERA.

The Drama's laws the Drama's patrons give.

MR. Chatterton, the manager and lessee of Drury-lane Theatre, London, has recently produced a new play by Mr. Dion Boucicault, entitled *Formosa*. It has been somewhat roughly handled, not by the recognised critics, who, as usual in London, have glossed over all faults, and condoned all offences against good taste, but by one or two "amateur critics," who have written with great ability and effect in the *Times*. Mr. Chatterton has replied to these attacks, and, in the course of his remarks, gives the story of his experiences as a theatrical manager:—

For seven years I have been the manager of this house, and this is my experience. I have produced the best plays of Shakespere, Byron, Milton, and Goethe. To illustrate these works I engaged Miss Helen Faucit, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Barry Sullivan, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Montgomery, and all the tragic talent to be obtained. I employed Mr. Beverley and numerous assistants to paint the scenery, sparing no expense to render the representations perfect. My enterprise was supported cheerfully by the pit and gallery, but my boxes and stalls were sadly deserted. I lost money. Had not the pantomime and Christmas come to my rescue I could not have stood my ground at all. I was stubborn, and pursued this policy for pride's sake, during six years. But, sir, I am neither a literary missionary nor a martyr; I am simply the manager of a theatre, a vendor of intellectual entertainment to the London public, and I found that Shakespere spelt ruin and Byron bankruptcy. In this extremity, to which I was led by my faith in the fine taste of the upper classes for the poetic drama, I turned to the dramatist who has made the fortunes of more than one manager in London. I need not say with what result. By his advice I opened the theatre in August, when London is supposed to be empty, at a period when no manager has ever dared to open it until now. To my objections he replied that the city was only cleared of those who never patronised the drama they talked so much about; that London always had three millions of people in it when town was said to be empty; that he wrote for the middle classes and the working classes, who alone could be relied on to support any intellectual entertainments; and that where they led their betters would follow. He proved to be right. The amount taken daily at my box-office before the doors

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open for securing stalls and private boxes alone to see *Formosa* exceeds the gross contents of my theatre to witness *Macbeth*. Five years ago I produced *Comus* in the most splendid manner. The public would not come to see it. They praised it and kept away. At the same time Mr. Boucicault's drama *The Streets of London* was produced at the Princess's Theatre, and for 200 nights that theatre was crammed nightly with those who deserted Milton. Now we have changed hands. *Acis and Galatea*, the classic work of Handel, was produced at the Princess's a fortnight ago, in the most magnificent style, and with what result? The manager closes his doors next week, and awaits the production of a new drama. I, on the contrary, produce *Formosa*, by the author of *The Streets of London*, and I obtain that public patronage which my rival enjoyed five years ago. The public have been a good deal abused, managers have been called mercenary and we have been led to understand that there is an intellectual and refined class somewhere, who only want the opportunity to come out and support the higher class of dramatic entertainment. Where are they? Mr. Macready, my predecessor in management here, tried to discover their existence, but retreated from the search with very sore pockets, just as I did. No such customers exist. There is, however, a class of literary men and *dilettanti* that profess to deplore the degradation of our times. I have remarked, however, that when I produce Shakespere these gentlemen, who are entitled by courtesy to admission to the theatre, rarely ask for orders, but since I have produced *Formosa* I have been overwhelmed with applications from this quarter for private boxes for their wives and families. I state facts; I allow others to comment upon them.

THE CHILD AND THE PHILOSOPHER.—M. Legove, of the French Institute, relates that when he once threatened a little damsel that "if she didn't behave properly he would tell every one he knew," the child responded, "Well, that doesn't trouble me."—"And pray why not?" he asked. "Because," replied the precocious little philosopher, "there are a great many more people that you don't know, and they will never hear anything about it."

TOUGH EXAMINATION PAPERS.—An amusing periodical, got up by the boys at Uppingham school, gives a capital skit on the style of "examination papers" frequently presented for the torture of pupils. We select one or two examples:—"Supposing the river Ganges to be three cubits in breadth (which it isn't), what is the average height of the Alps, stocks being at 91¼?"—"If in Autumn apples cost 4d. a pound in London, and potatoes a shilling a score in Spring, when will greengages be sold in Paris at 1½d. each, Spanish oranges being at a discount of five per cent.?"—"If two men can kill two brace of partridges in going up the right side of a rectangular turnip field, how many would be killed by five men and a terrier pup in going down the other side?"—"If a milkmaid, 4 feet 10 inches in height, while sitting on a three-legged stool, took four pints of milk out of every fifteen cows, what was the size of the field in which the animals grazed, and what the girl's name and age?"—"If 30,000,000,000 of human beings have lived since the beginning of the world, how many[may we safely say will die before the end of it? N.B. This example is to be worked out by simple subtraction, algebra, and the rule of three. Compare results."

THE SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD.—A correspondent informs us that the following announcement may be seen in a watchmaker's shop window, near the Congregational Chapel in the Bury New Road:—"This Senter Saconds Gewled in five holds 55/-"

ANECDOTE OF WAGNER.—A new specimen of the numerous eccentricities of Richard Wagner, the inventor of "the music of the future," is given in a book lately published by Herr Mendes, under the title of *Wagner at Home*. There is a room in Wagner's house, says the author, with a gorgeously decorated ceiling, and tapestry of leather embroidered with gold. On the walls are portraits of Göethe, Schiller, and Beethoven. The two poets are placed facing each other, but opposite Beethoven there is nothing but a looking glass. On turning to Wagner for an explanation, the musician placed himself in front of the glass, in which his face was reflected, thus supplying the deficiency. It is added that this is the only kind of portrait of himself that Wagner allows to be kept in his house.

THE MANCHESTER ATMOSPHERE.—Manchester weather has become a byword. Dr. Angus Smith devotes several pages of his report, as inspector under the Alkali Act, to this subject. The total of hydrochloric and sulphuric acid, in relation to Blackpool, which is taken as 100, was as follows:—Didsbury, 315; Buxton, 333; St. Helens, 474; and Manchester, 527. The hydrochloric (muriatic) acid, Blackpool being again taken as 100, was, at Buxton 247, at Didsbury 277, at Manchester 369, and at St. Helens 516. But it is in sulphuric acid that Manchester shows a pre-eminence. Blackpool being again taken at 100, the relation stands thus:—Didsbury stands at 320, Buxton 345, St. Helens 468, and Manchester 549.

IRISH WIT.—On returning to his family, after an absence of some weeks, Captain Johnson had been driven from Kingstown to Dublin by a carman, who, looking discontentedly at the fare paid him, said, "Shure your honour will give a trifle more than this?"—"Not a rap," said the captain. "Bad luck to me, but you would," persisted Paddy, "if you knew all, then."—"What do you mean?" asked Johnson, anxiously, "Faix, dat's tellins, any way; and is it only for my fare I'm to tell my news?"—"Well, well," said the captain, "Here's another shilling. Now, what has happened?"—"Sorra the harm at all," replied Pat; "only I thought you'd not begrudge a little extra som'at to know that I druv ye the last three miles without a linch-pin."

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

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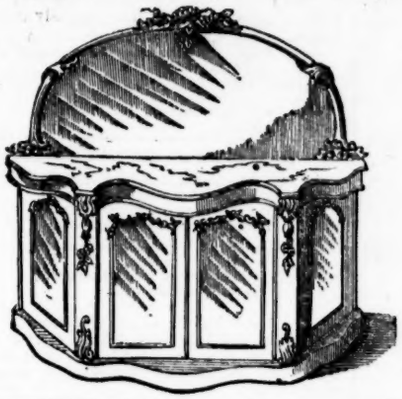

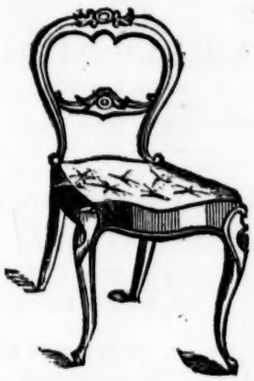

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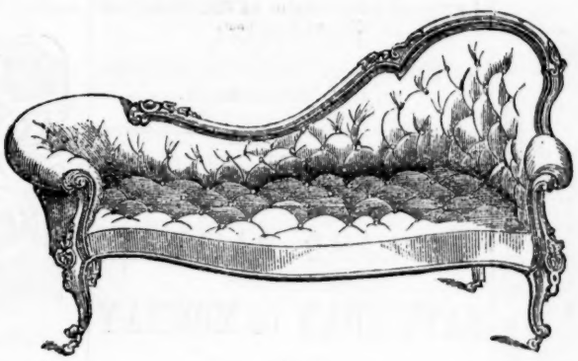

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